

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: June 14, 2018

Agenda Item: Canyon Creek WMA Cartan & Palmquist Additions (R3)

Bureau: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background:

FWP is seeking Commission endorsement to pursue two additions to the Canyon Creek WMA: 1) the Cartan Addition would add approximately 232 acres of important wildlife habitat to the WMA (59 acres between the Mill Creek Unit and Hwy 279 plus 178 acres about 1.25 miles south of the WMA); and 2) the Palmquist addition would add 4-7 acres between the Mill Creek Unit and the highway. The primary goal of both projects is to ensure the ecological integrity of the WMA while conserving wildlife habitats that extend beyond the bounds of the WMA. Two of the three parcels under consideration would establish a new WMA boundary against the Lincoln Road (Highway 279), avoiding potential development that could otherwise directly impact the WMA's habitat and recreation values. These parcels, like the existing Canyon Creek WMA, would provide hunting opportunity for mule deer and elk, winter range for mule deer and moose, and spring, summer and fall range for all three of these big game species. In addition, the entire suite of carnivores, grizzly and black bear, wolves, Canada lynx, wolverine, bobcat, etc., use the area. Acquisition would further protect a stream corridor, while also providing increased angler access, providing additional fishing opportunity for brook trout and rainbow trout in Canyon Creek.

The properties are located within the focus area of the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust (MFWCT), which applies funds gained from the sale of Canyon Ferry cabin-site leases to land conservation, with an emphasis on projects in the upper Missouri River drainage. MFWCT could be the primary funding source for the projects.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

Formal public involvement under the Montana Environmental Policy Act would occur following the Commission's endorsement and negotiations with the landowners.

Alternatives and Analysis:

The only viable alternative is not acquiring one or more of these parcels, leaving open the potential for possible conflicts on adjacent WMA lands.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends the commission endorse these proposed additions to Canyon Creek WMA, to conserve valuable fish and wildlife habitat and public recreational opportunities on the subject parcels and on the adjacent WMA.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission endorse FWP's proposal to work on the Cartan and Palmquist additions to Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area and complete associated due diligence and analysis.